Cosmogony in the Vedas, Brāhmanas and Upanisads, with reference to early Buddhism

Davies, Alan James

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The approach I have taken here is basically descriptive rather than analytical. I have concentrated a lot on the Vedas, possibly at the expense of the other material, led partly by personal preference and partly by awareness of past neglect by many writers on Indian thought and religion. The introduction contains an outline of the literature being studied, drawing some attention to attitudes taken towards it in India and the West. Further comments are made regarding its interpretation and the theme of cosmogony is then introduced in the context of the literature. The first four chapters look at different aspects of Vedic (essentially Rgvedic) cosmogony: some important underlying principles; the creative process itself; and some problems associated with describing or explaining the source of reality, whether philosophically or mythologically. Chapter five turns attention briefly to the Atharva Veda. The next two chapters concentrate on the Brāhmaṇas: firstly on sacrifice and other principles and secondly on certain aspects of Brāhmaṇic mythology. Next there are four chapters on the Upaniṣads, looking at their different language but similar fundamental concerns to the Vedas. Finally, Early Buddhism is touched on in the next two chapters, and the last compares some Buddhist ideas with Upaniṣadic ones. A short appendix includes some further notes on cosmogony in other cultures, helping to put the Indian ideas in a wider context.

COSMOGONY IN THE VEDAS, BRĀHMAṆAS AND UPANIṢADS, WITH REFERENCE TO EARLY BUDDHISM.

Thesis submitted by Alan James Davies for the degree of M.A.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Aitareya Brāhmaṇa
AN	Aṅguttara Nikāya
AV	Atharva Veda Saṁhitā
BU	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad
ChU	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
DN	Digha Nikāya
ĪU	Īśa Upaniṣad
JaimB	Jaimïnīya Brāhmaṇa
KathU	Kaṭha Upaniṣad
KauU	Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad
MaiU	Maitrāyanīya (Maitrī) Upaniṣad
MunU	Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad
PU	Praśna Upaniṣad
ṚV	Ṛg Veda Saṁhitā
ŚB	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
SN	Samyutta Nikāya
ŚU	Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad
SV	Sāma Veda Saṁhitā
TB	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa
TS	Taittirīya Saṁhitā
TU	Taittirīya Upaniṣad
TMB	Tāṇḍya Mahā Brāhmaṇa
YV	Yajur Veda (Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā)

Introduction.

i. An outline of the literature.

In discussing the Vedas, reference is generally made to the Ṛg Veda (ṚV) and, to a lesser extent, to the Atharva Veda (AV). Of the four Vedas, the ṚV is the first and foremost. It is one of the oldest cultural records of any Indo-European people, preserved for a long time by means of an ancient oral tradition and fixed in its present form around 1000 BC. It consists of 1028 poems and hymns, mostly of a religious nature. The Sama Veda (SV) is almost entirely derived from the ṚV, as a collection of verses for use in the ritual. The Yajur Veda (YV), which exists in two major redactions, is a collection of mainly sacrificial lore. It also derives some material from the ṚV. The AV, a further collection of religious and magical poetry representing the heritage of the easternmost Indo-Aryan tribes, was codified some three or four hundred years after the ṚV under the influence of the Ṛgvedic priests.

The poets of the Vedas, honoured with the title ṛṣi, are to this day in India regarded as inspired visionaries and enlightened teachers. Veda itself means literally 'knowledge' and Indian religious tradition puts the hymns in the category of divine revelation. The Western academic tradition, on the other hand, has for a long time ignored the high reverence paid to them and has interpreted them merely as the outpourings of a primitive religious consciousness overawed by the vast mystery of nature. Only quite recently have Western writers been expressing views which take into account the possibility of deeper interpretation of the Vedas and

give more credit to the traditional Indian viewpoint.<1>

The Brāhmaṇas (the earliest dating from about 900 BC) grew up around the Vedas as collections of commentaries, speculative and interpretative, relating above all to the performance of religious rites. The authors clearly considered themselves the guardians of a sacred heritage, but were mainly concerned with the hymns themselves only in so far as they help to illustrate and justify the ritual (which is described in minute and complex detail). The Brāhmaṇas have none of the colour and spontaneity that characterises the Vedic poetry and they can be said to represent a period of religious decline and fossilisation<2>. By virtue of their antiquity and their closeness to the Vedas, the Brāhmaṇas are yet held in high regard in India, though their long-winded and repetitive prose has inspired little interest and attention from Western academics<3>. Their main value to us here is that they help to fill in some of the background to myths and deities which are only alluded to in the hymns.

The border between the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads is not clearly defined. The Āraṇyakas (forest books) form a bridge between them, but all three categories overlap. The Upaniṣads form the closing portion of the Vedic literature proper and as a body are sometimes called the Vedānta ('end of the Veda'). Though many more recent works are called Upaniṣad, only twelve or thirteen of the oldest ones are generally recognised as absolutely authentic. These date from between about 700 and 300 BC. In general terms, the significant change from Brāhmaṇa, through Āraṇyaka, to Upaniṣad is a shift in emphasis away from the externals of ritual towards inner experience and knowledge of spiritual reality. Their

authors came mostly from within orthodox Brāhmaṇic circles, but increasingly expressed dissatisfaction with orthodox religion and looked beyond it for their spiritual needs, accepting the beneficial influence of various unorthodox trends including Yoga. If the Brāhmaṇas represent a period of spiritual decline, the Upaniṣads represent one of rebirth or reawakening.

The challenge to Brāhmaṇism came from within and outside its own ranks. Alongside the Upaniṣadic revival arose various powerful spiritual movements, the most significant of which is Buddhism, whose founder ranks as one of the greatest figures in Indian (and indeed world) history . Though Buddhism later almost disappeared from India, its earliest records, preserved like the Vedas by a sophisticated oral tradition and first written down in the first century BC (some 500 years after the Buddha's death), have been preserved as the Pali Canon, mostly in the form of discourses given by the Buddha to his followers. One of the striking things about the Buddha's style and approach is his insistence on practice rather than theorising. He avoided metaphysical questions and refused to give any opinion on them (except to say that such questions were futile), preferring to concentrate on the practical steps towards realisation of higher knowledge and the supreme goal, nibbāna (skt. nirvāṇa <4>).

ii. Notes on interpretation.

Earlier Western indologists, several of whom were themselves missionaries, could easily fall into the trap of assuming for their own Christianity an innate cultural and

spiritual superiority. Now, in a more secular age, we are more likely to assume innate superiority for the scientific over any other approach to knowledge. The Vedas are the texts most underestimated as a result of this kind of prejudice, particularly when it is also assumed that the development of religion and knowledge must follow an evolutionary progression from lower to higher. Because of evolutionary thinking, the period of the Upaniṣads and early Buddhism has often been represented by Western writers as the coming of age, so to speak, of Indian religion and consequently the Vedas depicted as little more than a primitive prologue to the main event<5>. If I have given more attention in this study to the Vedas than to other areas of the literature, it is partly in order to try and correct the balance.

The Vedic poets communicated mainly through myths and symbols and their hymns were intended for interpretation on various levels according to the intellectual sophistication and the degree of spiritual awareness of the listener<6>. A major hindrance to interpretation is that the poets naturally presupposed a certain degree of familiarity with the mythology and symbolism current at the time. As a result these are never explained or described in full and their meaning is not always (if indeed ever) readily accessible to us. Nevertheless, as Werner points out<7>, it is important to decipher that meaning as far as possible and to reformulate it in more familiar conceptual terms if we are to do justice to the deeper message contained in the Vedas.

The predominantly conceptual style of both the Upaniṣadic and the early Buddhist texts presents fewer interpretative problems than the poetry of the Vedas, being that much closer

to the philosophical and scientific styles of our own time. Problems do arise from commentators making more use of contrast than comparison - perhaps a reflection of the fact that, despite centuries of peaceful coexistence and mutual influence, Buddhism and Hinduism have always remained officially separate and the adherents of both have tended to exaggerate their differences at the expense of what they actually have in common. Certainly important differences exist, as they do between the Vedas and the later literature, but I hope the following study will show that many of the apparent differences between these three great peaks of Indian spirituality - the Vedas, the Upaniṣads and early Buddhism - have more to do with the means of expression than with what is actually being expressed.

iii. The theme of cosmogony.

A primary driving force behind the Vedic vision, as also behind the Upaniṣads and Buddhism, is an attitude of enquiry which takes nothing for granted and seeks to understand fully the very essence of reality. A verse from the RV goes:

> I ask you about the furthest limit of earth;
> Where, I ask, is the centre of the world?
> I ask you about the Stallion's prolific seed;
> I ask you about high heaven where abides the Word.
>
> (1.164.34)<8>

This verse is expanded and explained by Panikkar (exemplifying the ideal of reformulating Vedic symbols in more easily comprehensible conceptual terms) as an investigation into:

> The boundaries of our existence, its extreme limits; the core of the whole creation, its energy and dynamism; the mystery of life, especially of human life; and the all-encompassing spiritual reality that embraces not only the created world but also transcendent reality, that is, the mystery of the spirit.<9>

Cosmogony, which concerns the source of life and the universe and the relationship of the individual to that source, is one aspect of the whole mystery that confronts man and one that occupied the Vedic poets a great deal. The hymns are rich in imagery of dawn and the awakening of life, light and consciousness, as well as myths directly dealing with origins. The philosophical portions found later in the Vedas show a continuing concern which carries on into the Upaniṣads and later literature. Cosmogony continues to have an immediacy and importance because it is far more than just the search for a reasonable explanation of how things came to be what they are now through events that occurred in the distant past. By projecting back to 'the beginning', those poets and philosophers were aiming to discover and communicate the meaning of their lives in the present.

1. The creator and other principles in the Vedas.

Creation, in the sense in which the Old Testament story is generally understood, ex nihilo, has no real place in the Vedic world-view. Equally, there is no place for a creator-god as the sole originator of this world. If a creator-figure is invoked at all to explain the appearance of the world it is in a similar sense to the Greek demiurgos, as a shaper or fashioner of some kind of pre-existent potential. There are various devas (deities) fulfilling this role, with names like Tvaṣṭr (= wright, carpenter) and the Ṛbhus (from the adjective, ṛbhu = skillful, clever). The work of creation is sometimes likened to a feat of construction, little different in principle from building a house. A hymn to Viśvakarman, "All-maker", asks what is the tree and what the timber, the building material, of which the world is made.

The 'creator' is not regarded as the absolute source of everything, nor indeed can this particular 'creation' of his be regarded as a totally unique production, once and for all. Both he and it are part of a larger pattern. In the following short poem a fundamental cosmic rhythm is symbolised by waves which give rise to the year, that is time, marked out by seasonal changes and cycles such as day and night. Time comes into being before the creator and his works, so that he and they are subject to its laws as everything else "that blinks the eye", that wakes and sleeps, lives and dies.

> 1. From blazing Ardor (tapas) Cosmic Order (ṛta) came and Truth (satya); from thence was born the obscure night; from thence the Ocean with its billowing waves.

2. From Ocean with its waves was born the year
which marshals the succession of nights and days,
controlling everything that blinks the eye.

3. Then, as before, did the creator (Dhātṛ) fashion
the Sun and Moon, the Heaven and the Earth,
the atmosphere and the domain of light.

(RV 10.190)<10>

Dhātṛ (establisher, preserver) here represents an intelligent force behind the structuring of the cosmos, but is not himself the source of the material which he shapes. The poet does not attempt to describe that source, opening with the first movement, as it were, of the unfolding of existence: tapas. Tapas, a most important concept in the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, can be translated simply as 'heat' and means the fervour of asceticism or of spiritual endeavour as well as the creative energy which animates the universe.

So, a creator, if mentioned at all, is a secondary power. Far more significant to the Vedic world-view are certain suprapersonal principles, inherent in the nature of reality and active from the beginning in the process of the world's manifestation. Tapas is one of these, followed here by ṛta and satya.

Satya, truth, is etymologically connected with sat, being, and is often extolled with ṛta as one of the original principles underlying existence. Whatever is, is true and meaningful. The Vedic ṛṣis saw life and the universe as a sacred whole. No element or aspect of reality could be regarded as so small or so trivial as to be meaningless.

Truth as a cosmic principle as well as sacred ideal in human behaviour remains of the utmost importance throughout the history of Indian religion and philosophy.

Translated in this poem as 'Cosmic Order', ṛta is linguistically cognate with the Latin rectus and ritus and with the English 'right' and 'rite'. It is used as an adjective to mean 'fitting'<11>, 'proper', 'honest', 'holy'. It is close in meaning to the old-Iranian aša<12>. As a noun it describes eternal, universal Law or Order underlying everything that is. To the ṛṣis of the Vedas it was the necessary foundation of a structured cosmos, guaranteeing the consistent continuity of existence. The term ṛta is superceded by dharma in post-Vedic India and in Buddhism, dhamma (skt. dharma) embodies the same notion.

The workings of ṛta are recognised in visible aspects of the universe's natural rhythm. For example, Uṣas, Dawn, by virtue of her regularity and dependability, is said to be faithful to ṛta - not merely mechanical or automatic, but "well understanding" (ṚV 1.124.3) - and she is called child of ṛta (ṚV 1.113.12). So too, the sun is called the face (anīkam) of ṛta (ṚV 6.51.1). The gods, particularly Varuṇa, uphold and maintain ṛta, while yet subject to it themselves:

> Those Lords of ṛta, of light, I invoke
> who uphold ṛta by means of ṛta
> Mitra and Varuṇa.
> (ṚV I.23.5)<13>

Ṛta cannot be regarded as commandment imposed from without: arising with reality - from within, so to speak - ṛta governs its unfolding. But it is not to be understood as

a law of merely mechanical evolution because it includes moral law, and moral law on a cosmic scale implies that choice and responsibility have a role to play in directing the evolution of reality and of individual beings.

In Vedic, as in other mythologies (such as Greek), the precreational state is often symbolised by night. For the primal substance, the world potential waiting to be shaped by the forces of creation, the most frequently occurring symbol in the Vedas is water (āpaḥ), often hailed as a group of deities, the waters. The waters are found all over the world as a symbol of that potential, and may also be used to represent the individual or collective unconscious: that is, the well of hidden potential that underlies and surrounds our everyday waking consciousness. There are many parallels between the cosmic and the individual in Indian thinking. A powerful image which can be interpreted in terms of dawn and birth, or cosmogonically, or as an illustration of enlightenment - the dawning of consciousness or spiritual revelation - is that of the birth of fire or light in the Waters. The birthplace or dwelling-place of Agni (fire, deity and physical phenomenon, cognate with the Latin ignis), in the Waters is "one of the best established points in Vedic mythology"<14>. A related cosmogonic myth is that of Hiraṇyagarbha, the golden egg (embryo, germ), the theme of RV 10.121, a hymn which tries to demonstrate the unknowability and unnameability of the original state:

> When came the mighty Waters, bringing with them
> the universal Germ, whence sprang the Fire,
> thence leapt the God's One Spirit into being.
> What God shall we adore with our oblation?
>
> (10.121.7)<15>

2. The creative process, cosmic and human.

I said that this particular creation could not be regarded as a totally unique production, once and for all, as I think it is reasonable to infer from RV 10.190 - particularly with the words yathā-pūrvam, "as before", in verse 3 - the notion of a repeated cycle of creations in which the creator, though perhaps the highest of living beings, is himself subject to time, change and eventual dissolution. On the whole this has been regarded as a more recent development in Indian thought than the Vedas, and it might be argued that the hint of it in this poem, a relatively late one, is still evidence of it as a late development. However, while the case cannot easily be proven either way, so much depending on the interpretation of symbols and imagery, the idea is certainly compatible with the rest of the Vedic vision.

If there is a universal cycle of emanation and dissolution, the creation cannot be an event that occurs once only. Neither in the Vedas is it merely the big event at the beginning of the cycle, the first movement after which everything else unfolds more or less automatically. Creation is not really seen as an event at all, rather as an ongoing, endlessly repeated process, reflected on all levels in the natural cycle and in human activity. As Werner says, in discussing the divine mother Aditi in terms of mystical experience, the cosmogony is to be understood as a "constant flow between the unmanifest and the manifest"<16>.

According to Kuiper, who tends to explore the mythology in terms of how the Vedic Indians might have practised their

religion, cosmogonic myths owed their importance to the fact that "every decisive moment in life was considered a repetition of the primeval process"<17>. One myth he looks at a good deal has long been recognised as central to the Vedic vision, being referred to probably more than any other in the hymns yet never told in full. This is the myth of Indra and Vṛtra. Vṛtra, 'obstruction' or 'resistance', is the serpent-demon who holds captive the fertile waters (or cows or maidens) until slain by the warrior-king of the gods, the thunderbolt-wielding, Soma-drinking Indra.

At first European scholars read into it little more than a dramatisation of the annual monsoon rains and of the Aryan conquest of northern India<18>. On these levels Vṛtra represents the demon of drought (or the rain-cloud itself) or the strongholds of the indigenous 'dasas'; Indra is the storm-god releasing the rains or the war-god releasing the wealth, women and cattle of the enemy.

On a deeper level, the myth is a cosmogonic one: Vṛtra represents the cosmic night, obscurity and inertia, in which the fertile potential of existence is plunged: Indra is the active principle which pierces the darkness, releases the potential and initiates the creative process of existence. Kuiper believes the myth would have been a central feature in new year rites<19>. The regular repetition of these rites to ensure continuation of the natural cycle and the frequent calls in the hymns for Indra to fight and be victorious (eg. RV 4.19.8; 8.78.4) can be interpreted as indicating the need for the creative power to be constantly at work for the maintenance of existence.

Mankind in the Vedas is seen as an integral part of a world of complex intelligences and forces, so naturally it was understood that he could participate in and influence cosmic events. Naturally too, cosmic processes were sometimes described in terms of human activity. A relatively late poem of the RV (10.90) celebrates the cosmogony as a sacrifice of Puruṣa (lit. 'person'). Puruṣa is described as all that has been and is to be, encompassing actual existence as well as the unborn, unmanifest, realm. One quarter of Puruṣa constitutes the beings of the actual world, three quarters the immortal, the unborn. That part of him which is born or evolves "down here", is sacrificed by the gods, each part of the sacrifice corresponding to a different aspect of the universe. The close connection established between cosmic processes and human activity, especially ritual activity, continues to be expressed in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, the imagery of Puruṣa underlying much of the cosmogony and cosmology in those texts.

Examination of a further level of the myth of Indra and Vṛtra shows again how cosmological and psychological processes are seen to run parallel. On this further level, Indra's conflict with Vṛtra represents the active urge to creativity, enlightenment and freedom, over ignorance and inertia within the individual.

3. Duality and oneness.

To the seers of the Vedas, the vision of essential unity underlying the apparent multiplicity of the world was supremely important and one way they found to illustrate that unity was by projecting back to the 'original state'. The original, primeval state is undifferentiated oneness, while the world of normal experience seems to be characterised by complementary and opposing pairs: being and non-being, light and dark, life and death, male and female, and so on. Thus, an early stage of the manifestation of the world must involve splitting or polarising the undifferentiated oneness.

In the story of Indra and Vṛtra, Indra represents the active masculine principle while the waters held by Vṛtra are the fertile femenine potential, so the myth begins with the arisen state of duality. A cosmogonic myth alluded to briefly in the Vedas (RV 10.61.5-7) and further elaborated in the Brāhmaṇas, explains the origin of living beings as the result of the incestuous union of the primal father and his daughter, an image which illustrates the single origin and the interelatedness of all. Aditi, the divine mother, is another image of the source of all as a single universal parent. The divine parents, Dyaus and Pṛthivī, are in nearly every instance referred to in the dual form, Dyāvāpṛthivyau, Heaven-and-Earth as if pointing us back to the original state of oneness. One hymn asks:

> Which of these two came earlier, which came later?
> How did they come to birth? Who, O Seers can discern it?
> They contain within them all that has a name,
> While days and nights revolve as on a wheel.
>
> (RV 1.185.1)<20>

Dyāvāprthivyau is/are neither the fully evolved state characterised by duality nor the absolute premanifest oneness. The effect is similar to that suggested by the pictorial symbol (known in Europe as well as in Asia): which depicts the fundamental universal forces in a state of unity through balanced opposition. One step 'forward' brings us to the world of duality. One step further 'back' is absolute oneness which obviously has no subject, no object, no point of reference beyond or outside. So even if that original state could be realised, how could it be described except by indirect means?

The first two verses of the celebrated nāsadīya-sūkta (RV 10.190<21>) are an attempt to describe the pre-creational undifferentiated oneness by means of negative and paradox. The only positive term - and it is as neutral as possible - is tad ekam, 'the one' or 'that one'. It cannot be said that it is or is not. Space and time have not yet appeared. There is a hint of personality but no discernable creative agent. There is only 'that One' possessing a kind of inherent dynamism and unmanifest potential expressed by the paradoxical "breathed windless".

The third and fourth verses describe the unfolding of reality as the arising of 'the One' in actual manifested form through the creative "force of heat", tapas, a psychological equivalent of which is love or desire, kāma, "the first seed of mind" (manaso retaḥ) in the next verse. Feeling and intelligence are thus regarded as being in the nature of reality (not as they tend to be regarded today in the West, as more or less accidental by-products of certain carbon-based life-forms). And parallel to the outward

movement of manifestation is the inward movement of "the sages searching in their hearts with wisdom" to discover the reality behind being and non-being, which again brings together the cosmological and the psychological.

In the next verse the arisen state of duality obscures the original oneness. We see that the sages may penetrate the mystery with their understanding, but that the One cannot be placed or grasped conceptually. In the manifested state there are discernible agents: creative force and fertile power, energy and impulse, but these are no longer identical with the undifferentiated source. The last two verses express the poet's own doubt about the nature of that source, leaving the possibility open for higher understanding, however. The gods are recognised as being born in and belonging to a later stage. Perhaps even the highest God too, "He who surveys it {the creation} in the highest heaven", belongs to this side of the world's manifestation and is ignorant of the final answer. The Vedic vision depends not on blind faith but on uncompromising honesty and tireless inquisitiveness.

Though the Unborn pre-creational One behind the world of apparent change and multiplicity, cannot be described in a way that would convey its true nature, the Vedic poets often strongly suggest that it can actually be experienced and known directly. Those that know are referred to as the wise ones, seers who have attained immortality. Lesser mortals may turn to them for assistance:

> Not understanding, and yet desirous to do so,
> I ask the wise who know, myself not knowing:
> Who may he be, the One in the form of the Unborn,

Who props in their place the six universal regions?

(RV 1.164.6)<22>

There is always emphasis on knowledge by direct personal experience rather than mere learning or belief:

> I know that Primordial Man (puruṣa), golden as the sun,
> beyond darkness. Knowing him a man even now
> becomes immortal. This is the way
> to attain him; there is no other.
>
> (YV 31.18)<23>

However this does not necessarily mean that learning and belief and the outward forms of religion are pointless. One has to be aware that there is a higher spiritual reality before one can set out to realise it fully. It would seem that the myths, symbols and religious rites, pointing to that reality, were intended by the seers to help raise the consciousness of ordinary people to this ideal - which has characterised Indian philosophy and religion to this day.

4. The Divine Mother

The nāsadīya-sūkta with its philosophical style is one of the later hymns of the RV, though clearly it draws on aspects of the heritage that precedes it. Within the Vedic literature many different conceptions and expressions of the primal One are found, and we come across theistic expressions alongside non-theistic ones. Each hymn addressed to a god (or a group of gods) or dealing with an impersonal principle may raise its subject above all others, but no conflict arises because of the recognition that all forms of expression are only pointers to the real thing which transcends them all. "The seers call in many ways that which is One" (RV 1.164.46)<24>.

The goddess Aditi represents the One as a living conscious being, the divine mother of existence. The divine mother, in one form or another, has been a focus of popular worship in India throughout history, though we do not know what place, if any, Aditi may have held in the worship of ordinary people of Vedic times. She is a rather mysterious and undefined figure in the Vedas. No physical features other than her womb are mentioned and she is not associated with any special exploits. No hymn is devoted to her alone. Nevertheless, as Werner points out, despite her "low profile" she is called "the perfect goddess" (RV 2.40.6), "mother of gods and kings"(1.113.19; 2.27.7) and is said to be "all that has been born and still is to be born" (RV I.89.10)<25>. She is also referred to as the "centre of immortality" (RV 8.90.15).

Her name, most likely derived from the root da, has been translated as 'Boundlessness', 'Infinity', 'Freedom from

bonds'<26>. As the divine mother, she represents the infinite source of existence and its continued nourishment and protection. She supplies the gods with milk (RV 10.63.3) and Soma (drunk particularly by Indra in the fight against Vṛtra) is compared to her milk. She is spoken of as a cow (eg. RV 1.153.3; 8.90.15) and as the earth (eg. RV 1.72.9; AV 13.1.38), both great mothers and providers.

She represents actual manifested reality itself as well as the unmanifest potential, being called "mother, father and son" (RV 1.89.10). In another hymn it is put like this:

> Dakṣa was born of Aditi, Aditi of Dakṣa, for
> Aditi was born as your daughter, O Dakṣa!
>
> (RV 10.72.45)<27>

Here Dakṣa, "the skillful god", has the role of creator or demiurgos, producer of reality in its manifested form, having been himself produced from that same reality in its unlimited, pre-manifest form. The same idea is expressed in RV 10.90.5, where Puruṣa gives birth to Virāj (the "shining one") and is in turn born from Virāj.

Macdonell, like most of his contemporaries, found Aditi to be of little interest, regarding her primarily as a vague and primitive personification of the earth or of an abstract idea like 'infinity' or 'freedom'. He assumed any cosmogonic role or mystical association to be a secondary development:

> The indefiniteness of the name would easily have lent itself to mystical identifications, and the conception was naturally affected by the theogonic and cosmogonic speculations found in more recent

portions of the RV.<28>

Werner, on the other hand, reckons her cosmogonic motherhood to be of prime importance and for her origins to to be found in mystical experience rather than in speculation. The mystic experiences himself and the world as offspring of, and ultimately one substance with, the infinite divine source, directly dependent on it in every moment, whereas:

> a thinking mind, whether a simple or a sophisticated one, is satisfied with the idea of a first cause from which an independent and continuous line of causes and effects then proceeds further.<29>

If Aditi stands for the infinite primeval potential, her sons, the so-called Ādityas - a group of some seven or eight gods - represent various aspects of the manifested world. Chief amongst them is Varuṇa, whose name probably derives from the root vṛ, to 'cover' or 'encompass'. Werner again stresses the importance of mystical experience in the ingenious interpretation he gives to the name. He sees Varuna as the 'encompasser' or 'enveloper' of infinite space, therefore the surface of things. According to his interpretation, the world we experience, of separate and apparently substantial objects, is understood to be made up of "substanceless, empty shapes, created by the encompassing movement or power within the womb of the infinite"<30>.

If we accept this view, it makes sense that in the AV Varuṇa should be described as the warp and woof of the loom of the universe (AV 4.16.8) and that he should be intimately

connected in many hymns with ṛta, cosmic order, and also with māyā, by which he is said to have "measured out the earth, as it were, with a yardstick"<31>. Māyā, probably derived from the root mā (measure, construct) and cognate with the Greek metis (insight, shrewdness, cunning, advice, craft), seems most aptly translated by the English word 'craft' which has connotations of creative skill, art or artifice, magic or mysterious power, cunning, ingenuity and guile<32>.

In later times, particularly in Vedānta philosophy through the work of Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara and others, māyā is used to describe the dream-like insubstantiality of the world, as contrasted with the one all-embracing essential reality of brahman, and it comes to be more or less synonymous with "illusion". This has been regarded as a departure from its Vedic meaning<33>, but perhaps at most it only represents a subtle shift in emphasis. Varuṇa is the great māyin<34> among the gods and his creative activity (like his ordinances - ṛta) may be deceptive to men's limited understanding - for as the "encompasser" he is responsible for the illusion that things exist independently, in their own right, whereas they are in truth part of the one undivided infinite reality of Aditi.

5. Cosmogony in the Atharva Veda.

Rather as each hymn of the RV tends to raise the god to whom it is addressed to the position of the highest, so in the AV we see a number of different principles glorified as the one from which all else derives reality. Thus in 19.53 for example, kāla (time) is said to have sent forth all existence, including Prajāpati (Lord of creatures), often the creator-figure or demiurge in the AV, the Brāhmaṇas and the later literature. And in 19.54, time is said to be the source of the waters, brahman, tapas and the different dimensions of the universe. Heaven and Earth are his parents though they too derive their being from him.

In 9.2 and 19.52 kāma, love or desire, is extolled as the first and foremost of all. The opening of 19.52 echoes the nāsadīya-sūkta:

> In the beginning was Desire,
> the first seed of mind.
>
> (AV 19.52)<35>

As often in the early Upanisads, prāṇa, the spirit or life-force embodied in breath, is used as a symbol of that on which everything is based, the foundation of all that is and shall be. Prāṇa is quite close in meaning to ātman which, as we shall see, becomes the main term in the Upaniṣads for the supreme reality as experienced in the heart of the individual person. In one verse of a hymn devoted to prāṇa as the primal principle and the lord of life, it is linked with the cosmogonic image of Hiraṇyagarbha and (in a phrase similar to some of the famous utterances of the Upaniṣadic sages) with the true inner self of the individual:

Breath of Life, do not forsake me.
You are, indeed, I.
Like the Embryo of the Waters
I bind you to me that I may live!

(11.4.26)<36>

A powerful symbol in which many different ideas and images are brought together is skambha, 'support', the Cosmic Pillar, celebrated particularly in two hymns of the AV (10.7 and 8). On the simplest level skambha is pictured as a prop holding apart (and linking) heaven and earth, expressing the idea of the first act of creation as a separation of primordial opposites. But, going deeper than this, the two hymns point to skambha as the indivisible One beyond opposites. Skambha is "the One on whom the Lord of Life (Prajāpati) leaned for support when he propped up the world"(10.7.7)<37> and in him "the worlds consist; in him Creative Fervour (tapas) and Order (ṛta) have their ground"(10.7.29)<38>. Thanks to him "Heaven and Earth remain each fixed in place"(10.8.2)<39>. He is the essential One behind all forms:

What moves, what flies, what stands quite still,
what breathes, what breathes not, blinks the eye -
this, concentrated into a single One,
though multiple its forms, sustains the earth.

(10.8.11)<40>

In skambha the idea of the primal unmanifest source constantly surrounding and supporting manifested reality is strongly brought out. Like Aditi, skambha is both parent and child (10.8.27,28). Like Puruṣa (the imagery of Puruṣa

underlies the whole of 10.7), skambha is the one body of reality, his limbs and faculties corresponding to the different parts of the universe. He is like the hub of a wheel in which men and gods like spokes are set (10.8.34); or like the trunk of a tree on which the branches depend (10.7.38). Finally, as the essential One behind all forms, he is to be known directly as brahman (see below and note 43), identical with the inmost self (10.7.17; 10.8.37,38,43,44).

6. Sacrifice and other themes in the Brāhmaṇas.

A central theme of the Brāhmaṇas is yajña, sacrifice<41>. It was above all by means of the sacrifice that the Vedic-Brahmaṇic priesthood believed it could manipulate brahman, the mysterious sacred power understood to be associated with the ritual. Etymologically brahman may be derived from the root bṛh, 'grow, burst forth'<42> and can be interpreted in the earlier literature as the power by which things are made to happen or are brought into being<43>. It becomes by the time of the Upaniṣads one of the two most commonly used terms for the highest reality.

Sacrifice throughout the Vedic-Brahmaṇic literature has a cosmogonic function and the image of the creation as a cosmic sacrifice, as in the puruṣa-sūkta (ṚV 10.90), is one which occurs again and again in the Brāhmaṇas. Instead of Puruṣa, it is generally Prajāpati (Lord of creatures) or Brahmā (the personalised form of brahman), who produces the world and all beings in an act of self-sacrifice prompted by loneliness and desire. So, for example, at ŚB 7.5.2.6 Prajāpati fashions the different animals from his different faculties (prāṇa - 'vital airs'): man from his mind, the horse from his eye, and so on.

Sometimes the act of self-sacrifice exhausts the creator and requires a reciprocal act of sacrifice from the creation:

> When he had produced the creatures, Prajāpati fell into pieces. Being reduced to a (mere) heart he was lying exhausted. He uttered a cry: "Alas my life!" The waters heard him. They came to his aid and by means of sacrifice of the Firstborn they restored

him to his sovereignty.

(TB 2.3.6.1)<44>

A similar situation is described at ŚB 4.1.2. Here it is Agni who restores Prajāpati, and the commentator explains (v.26):

> Now that father (Prajāpati) is (also) the son: inasmuch as he created Agni, thereby he is Agni's father; and inasmuch as Agni restored him, thereby Agni is his father. <45>

Here in a rather laboured form we have the same notion that was expressed in the ṚV (eg. 10.72.4 and 10.90.5), that the original being is both producer and produced (or parent and child) of the creation. Closely related is the image of creation (particularly of mankind and other creatures) through incestuous union, which is found in the ṚV (eg. 10.61.5-7) and perpetuated in the Brāhmaṇas (eg. TMB 8.2.10; JaimB 3.2.61; TB 2.3.10). We meet it also in the Upaniṣads (eg. BU 1.4.1-6).<46>

Often in the Brāhmaṇas, the work of creation is simply attributed to a father figure, normally Prajāpati, without looking into his origin. Prajāpati is a figure who appears late in the Vedas, notably in ṚV 10.121, the hymn of the golden germ, where the unknown supreme god is identified in the final verse as Prajāpati, though many commentators reckon that to be an interpolation.

Though Prajāpati is most frequently cited as the creator-figure, first being or cosmic parent, the tendency which I noted particularly in connection with the AV, to elevate one

of a variety of principles to that position, is apparent also in the Brāhmaṇas. Thus, for example, Vāc (speech, the Word): in whom all beings live and "all the worlds find their support"(TB 2.8.8.4)<47>; "mother of the Veda and hub of immortality" (TB 2.8.8.5)<48>; "womb of the universe"<49>. Sometimes Vāc is presented as more or less subordinate, becoming the feminine counterpart or consort of the creator, not unlike the śakti figures in later Hinduism:

> This, [in the beginning], was only the Lord of the universe. His Word was with him. This Word was his second. He contemplated. He said, "I will deliver this Word so that she will produce and bring into being all this world."
>
> (TMB 20.14.2)<50>

In the AV, Vāc is linked with Virāj, according to Bhattacharyya an important femenine cosmogonic principle in the early literature<51>. Vāc is no doubt especially prominent in the Brāhmaṇas partly because of the great importance attached by the priestly commentators to verbal formulae<52> and to the details of correct recitation, but other principles are also invoked. At TB 2.2.9.1-2, for example, asat (non-being) is treated as the first principle, acting deliberately to come into being, in a passage which typifies the way some of the Brahmaṇic authors attempted to evoke the mysterious paradox of the precreational state using more or less philosophical language - rather less convincingly than the ṛṣi of ṚV 10.129.

A similar passage, positing manas (mind) as the first principle, clearly draws from ṚV 10.129, but again the ṛṣi's

delicate and precise use of words is unequalled:

> 1. Verily, in the beginning this (universe) was, as it were, neither non-existent nor existent; in the beginning this (universe), indeed, as it were, existed and did not exist: there was then only that Mind.
>
> 2. Wherefore it has been said by the Ṛṣi, "There was then neither the non-existent nor the existent".
>
> (ŚB 10.5.3)<53>

Prāṇa (spirit, breath, energy), also linked in the AV with Virāj (eg. AV 11.12), is sometimes invoked as the first principle (eg. ŚB 11.1.6.17) and also, as in the early Upaniṣads, used as a symbol of the inmost self of the individual, a role that is later taken over by the term ātman.

The Waters continue to be used as a symbol of the primal element, often linked in some way with the cosmogonic image of Hiraṇyagarbha (cf. RV 10.121), and with the related theme of Agni in the Waters. So, for example:

> In the beginning, to be sure, this world was water, nothing but a sea of water. The waters desired, "How can we be propagated?" They kindled their own ardor, performing this very act with fervor. While summoning their creative energy they warmed up and a golden egg was produced. At that time, to be sure, the year was not yet existing. This golden egg floated about for as long as a year...
>
> (ŚB 11.1.6.1)<54>

Also evident in this passage and many others in the Brāhmaṇas is tapas, the creative force of heat (eg. ŚB 11.5.8.1; 13.7.1.1). ŚB 13.7.1.1 relates that having found the practice of tapas fruitless, brahman made an offering of itself in all beings and all beings in itself. At TB 3.12.3.1, the self-existent brahman, the original principle, is called the highest tapas and, like Aditi, said to be father, mother and son.

7. Some myths of the Brāhmaṇas.

Several myths with cosmogonic interpretations appear in the Brāhmaṇas, sometimes shedding light on myths which are not fully revealed in the Vedas. Allusions made in the hymns may sometimes be explained by reference to the later texts. Also, deities who are rather shadowy figures in the Vedas, sometimes appear much more prominently in the Brāhmaṇas and the later literature. An example is Viṣṇu, who does not figure prominently in the Vedas though he is closely associated with Indra<55> and may well have greater significance than appears at first glance.

The myth of Viṣṇu's three strides is alluded to several times in the hymns. In RV 1.154, for example, he is the one "who measured out the earthly regions and propped the heavens above, accomplishing in his course three mighty strides" (v.1), and in whose "three mighty paces are set all worlds" (v.2)<56>. In the ŚB (eg. 1.2.5.1-9) he is identified with the sacrifice and as the sacrifice he is said to have won the whole world, for though the actual altar be small it represents the whole universe. Various strands of the mythology are later brought together in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa story of Vāmana the dwarf (as an incarnation - avatar - of Viṣṇu) who wins the world from demons by accomplishing three great strides. The myth can be interpreted cosmogonically, his three steps constituting (on one level) the threefold Vedic universe of earth, heaven and intermediate region.

The well known flood-myth, which has parallels in other (notably Semitic) mythology, also clearly has a cosmogonic interpretation. Flood or submersion in the world ocean or

waters can be interpreted as the cosmic sleep between world cycles. The myth is told at ŚB 1.8.1.1-6 and forms the basis of Viṣṇu's incarnation as Matsya the fish. His incarnation as the boar, Varāha, is foreshadowed ~~in~~ at TS 7.1.5.1 and ŚB 14.1.2.11, where Prajāpati becomes a boar to create the earth or to save it from submersion in the world-ocean.

In the story mentioned above, of Viṣṇu's three strides, he wins the world from the asuras, a common theme in the Brāhmaṇas where asura stands for demon or anti-god. The conflict between deva and asura, so much a feature of the Brāhmaṇas and the later folk literature of the Purāṇas, may actually represent on one level the shift of emphasis in popular worship from Varuṇa, the great asura, to Indra, king of the devas, which has already taken place by the time of the codification of the ṚV. Through most of the ṚV, asura still has a strongly positive sense and is used as a title of praise for many gods. This points back to the pre-Vedic era when asura (or its Indo-Iranian equivalent) was applied to the very highest, as evidence from the old-Iranian Avesta and the earliest portions of the ṚV shows.

There are undoubted parallels between the Zoroastrians' Ahura Mazda and the Vedic Varuṇa and there may be parallels too with Ouranos (probably linguistically cognate with Varuṇa) of ancient Greece, who is father of the titans. In Greek mythology the violent and incestuous titans may represent the dark forces of the primordial world between chaos and cosmos before the gods instituted their own ordered rule, overthrowing the former and imprisoning them in Tartaros. Interpreting Varuṇa and the asuras similarly, Kuiper takes "the problem of the asuras" - which he considers

of vital, central significance in Vedic mythology - to demonstrate what he sees as two distinct stages in the cosmogony <57>.

The first stage involves the spontaneous arising of the primordial world, full of turbulent forces and not truly differentiated, the world of potential life and being, represented symbolically by the image of the cosmic mountain floating on the waters. The asuras are associated with this stage. The second stage is instituted by Indra, king of the devas, whose heroic fight against the dragon of obstruction sets free the powers of life which manifest themselves as the ordered cosmos. The world of the asuras now becomes the nether world, the subterranean waters, a continual surrounding threat to coherent existence which must constantly reassert itself as the real over the merely potential. Not all the asuras are banished with it: the devas can call on the assistance of certain asuras and some asuras actually become devas. In the RV a distinction is made between devāv-asura, "asuras who have become devas", and asurāḥ-adevāḥ, "asuras who are not devas". Varuṇa, particularly, is accepted into the ranks of the devas, retaining lordship over the waters and thus his connection with the primordial world.

8. Changing attitudes and expression in the Upaniṣads.

A certain preoccupation with ritualism is still evident in parts of the Upaniṣads - particularly earlier parts which actually form the closing portions of the Brāhmaṇas - though we can see a definite change of emphasis. Sacrifice is still an important concept (important too is the imagery of Puruṣa, the cosmic sacrifice - see for example MuṇU 2.1.1-10) but, contradicting the prevailing attitude of the Brāhmaṇas, the authors of the Upaniṣads stress that meaningful sacrifice depends on an inner attitude and understanding rather than external observance. Recognition that in understanding rather than ritual lies the true meaning of the religious life can be found in the Brāhmaṇas, as at ŚB 10.5.4.16:

> By knowledge they ascend that (state) where desires have vanished: sacrificial gifts go not thither, nor the fervid practisers of rites without knowledge.<58>

However, as a rule this kind of statement is more characteristic of the Upaniṣads. A passage of MuṇU exemplifies the Upaniṣadic attitude, describing mere learning and ceremony as lower knowledge, the higher being "that by which the imperishable (akṣara) is apprehended"(1.1.5). It goes on to extoll the virtues and rewards of proper religious observances (1.2.1-6), but says that in themselves these cannot lead to real understanding and ultimate liberation. They, at best, can only bring one to attainment of heavenly worlds, worlds which are nevertheless born, created, subject to decay, whereas the true goal is the unborn, the uncreated, the imperishable (1.2.12-13).

That goal, is normally termed brahman or ātman, brahman indicating, so to speak, the objective angle of approach, ātman the subjective; brahman the essence of the universe, ātman the essence of the individual, the two ultimately to be recognised as identical.

As I mentioned earlier, by the time of the Upaniṣads brahman is already well established as a term for the highest reality. Ātman, possibly derived from the root an, 'breathe'<59>, is used in the Vedas to mean something like life-force or breath or spirit. It gradually takes over from symbols like prāṇa as the main term for that reality as experienced within the heart or spirit of the individual. It should be noted that its translation as 'soul' can be misleading because of some Western notions of a fixed and finite core within the individual which survives death.

The equation of ātman and brahman, as Deussen says<60>, forms the fundamental conception of the Upaniṣads, though we should bear in mind that the texts do not set out to establish a consistent philosophical doctrine. They are primarily records of instruction towards experience of the transcendent, representing a number of different individuals and groups and spanning quite a long period in time. It is not suprising that we can find in the Upaniṣads justification for a variety of views concerning the origins of the universe and the nature of reality. The appearance later of several distinct philosophical systems based on the Upaniṣads, each with its own cosmological framework and each regarded by its followers as the true interpretion of Upaniṣadic philosophy, bears witness to the variety.

The Upaniṣadic authors recognised that they were not dealing with the great questions for the first time and they acknowledged their inheritance from the Vedas<61>. They were not reluctant to borrow symbols and imagery from the ritual and the poems of the Vedas where these suited their purposes <62>. Originality for originality's sake was not seen as a virtue. However, even before the end of the Vedic period the mythological and symbolic language of the hymns appears to have been losing its effectiveness and their message had since become further obscured by the Brahmaṇic commentaries. So it is that the Upaniṣadic authors increasingly recast the old problems in a new kind of language, conceptual and philosophical, which was already emerging in the later portions of the RV and in the AV. The great achievement of the sages of the Upaniṣads lies in the rediscovery and reformulation of the true message of the ṛṣis in an idiom suited to their time.

The need for rediscovery and reformulation is constantly asserted, even where due regard is given to the answers discovered in the old texts. It is not enough just to accept what has gone before. ŚU opens with a series of questions as to the origin and cause of the world, offering various solutions that have been put forward already and recognising the need for their rediscovery:

> 1. Those who discourse on Brahman say: What is the cause? (Is it) Brahman? Whence are we born? By what do we live? And on what are we established? O ye who know Brahman, (tell us) presided over by whom do we live our different conditions in pleasures and other than pleasures (pains).

2. Time, inherent nature, necessity, chance, the elements, the womb or the person (should they) be considered as the cause?<63>

The means to direct knowledge of the true origin and cause is given in succeeding verses as dhyāna (meditation) and yoga, and the form in which it is expressed in this Upaniṣad is theistic, the author glorifying Rudra (Śiva) as creator, protector and the seat of immortality. Actual knowledge and experience of the One behind the multiple phenomena of the world may, as we saw in the Vedic hymns, give rise to theistic and non-theistic expressions which should not be regarded as mutually exclusive. Rather the different expressions merely confirm what we have already said, that the One cannot satisfactorily be pinned down as this thing or the other, as personal God or impersonal essence. Different people emphasise different aspects according to their different individual natures. We witness a kind of theism in the elevation of Prajāpati and Brahmā in the Brāhmaṇas. In the very earliest Upaniṣads (BU, ChU, TU, AU, KauU) the theistic approach does not figure prominently, though some later ones, particularly ĪU and ŚU, are more definitely theistic. Later still came a profusion of theistic Upaniṣads, in which can be seen the rise of popular worship of Viṣṇu and Śiva.

9. The limitations of language.

In attempting to speak of the first principle the Upaniṣadic authors are faced with the same problem as the ṛṣi of RV 10.129 - the problem of encompassing that which precedes and transcends ordinary existence in terms which are inadequate because they derive from and belong to ordinary existence as we know it. But the failure of words to describe the indescribable need not lead to a rejection of words, only to a careful recognition of their limitations. Such a recognition is found at KathU 2.3.12-13, for example, where the positive reality of ātman is affirmed with the qualification that its true nature is not immediately obvious either to the senses or the mental faculties:

> 12. Not by speech, not by mind, not by sight can he be apprehended. how can he be comprehended except by him who says, 'He is'?
>
> 13. He should be apprehended only as existent and then in his real nature - in both ways. When he is apprehended as existent, his real nature becomes clear (later on). <64>

As in the Brāhmaṇas, we find contradictions inevitably arising from the use of words like asat (non-being) and sat (being) to try and encompass that which the ṛṣi of RV 10.129 described as neither the one nor yet the other. The primal state is sometimes said to be non-existence from which existence arises (eg. TU 2.7; ChU 3.19.1; BU 1.2.1), against which stands the instruction that Śvetaketu receives from his father at ChU 6.2:

1. In the beginning, my dear, this was Being alone, one only, without a second. Some people say 'in the beginning this was non-being alone, one only, without a second. From that non-being being was produced'.

2. But how, indeed, my dear, could it be thus? said he. How could being be produced from non-being? On the contrary, my dear, in the beginning this was being alone, one only, without a second. <65>

The apparent contradictions thus raised, as commentators are eager to stress, do not necessarily betray deep differences in understanding what really constitutes the absolute. Radhakrishnan, in a note to this passage<66>, refers to Indian formal logic (according to which there are four kinds of non-existence, abhava), saying that we must distinguish here between absolute non-existence (atyantābhava) and prior or antecedent non-existence (pragabhava). When being is said to arise from non-being, non-being is to be understood as prior non-existence, which from another angle is potential or possible existence. Thus he says that Śvetaketu's father is refuting the use of asat only in the sense of absolute non-existence.

Deussen, commenting on the the first line of RV 10.129 with reference to the Upaniṣadic brahman, makes basically the same point in a slightly different way, explaining that the problem arises because of the fact that language itself derives from the world of empirical experience but is being used to describe something which lies beyond the limits of that experience:

> Since however metaphysics has to borrow all its ideas and expressions from the reality of experience, to which the circle of our conceptions is limited, and to remodel them solely in conformity with its needs, it is natural that in the process of time we should find the first principle of things defined now as the (not-empirical) being, now as the (empirical) not-being. <67>

One of the best known expressions in the Upaniṣads of the one beyond being and non-being, which communicates its indescribability very well is the simple formula attributed to Yājñavalkya: neti neti, 'not this, not that', repeated at BU 2.3.6; 3.9.26; 4.2.4; 4.4.22; 4.5.15. Other passages would seem to suggest that it is 'both this and that'. At MaiU 6.15 it is said that there are two forms of brahman, time and the timeless, and similarly at BU 2.3.1:

> Verily there are two forms of Brahman, the formed and the formless, the mortal and the immortal, the unmoving and the moving, the actual (existent) and the true (being).<68>

In RV 10.90, Puruṣa is said to exceed the world "by ten fingers breadth" and to surpass the immortal spheres "by consuming food", that is by being also the mortal world. Similarly, at BU 1.4.6 it is said that Brahmā, "though mortal himself, created the immortals". The absolute defies classification. It is not merely the actual, nor only the beyond. It can only be pointed to indirectly as the source of both and the would-be knower encouraged to find out for

himself. In Panikkar's words:

> The Upaniṣads attempt to resolve the dilemma by propounding the way of self-realization, the personal discovery of the hidden treasure. The Lord is within and without, personal and impersonal, moving and unmoving, Being and Nonbeing. He is the Lord precisely because he is not limited by any one pair of opposites.<69>

10. The process of manifestation.

The nature of the source is the first concern of cosmogony; the next is the way in which the source gives rise to the manifested world. A word used to describe the process of manifestation is *sṛṣṭi*, which can be translated as 'emanation' or 'emission'. Several similes are used to illustrate the process as a movement from within the supreme imperishable essence. It is compared to the way a spider produces its thread and the way sparks come from a fire (*BU* 2.1.20; *MuṇU* 1.1.7 & 2.1.1), such images serving to emphasise that the manifested universe is essentially inseparable from its source and that the process occurs through inherent tendencies in the nature of reality itself, not through anything external. Again, this is expressed mythologically in various ways.

One such mythological explanation of the origin of beings (*BU* 1.4.1-4) recalls the theme of incest which was found in the *Vedas* and *Brāhmaṇas*. A primal being symbolising the unmanifest potential, here called *ātman*, is moved by loneliness and desire to produce another. The *ātman* becomes both man and woman who then mate and produce humankind. Attempting to escape the incestuous union, the female becomes a cow but he becomes a bull, she becomes a mare but he a stallion and so on. Mating in the forms of various animals they produce all beings. The passage then goes on to describe the production of the gods from *ātman*, who "himself is all the gods", and the entry of *ātman* into the creation "even to the tips of the nails, as a razor is (hidden) in the razor-case, or as a fire in the fire-source."<70>

The image of the ātman producing the universe out of itself and then entering into it appears elsewhere. At TU 2,6 the ātman produces the world through exercise of tapas, then enters into it:

> Having entered it, he became both the actual and the beyond, the defined and the undefined, both the founded and the non-founded, the intelligent and the non-intelligent, the true and the untrue.
>
> (TU 2.6)<71>

The essential self, manifesting the world out of its own pre-existent potential, is thus said to be hidden in the multiple forms of existence and only comprehended when seen, not in any one aspect, but as that which is in every aspect and on which everything depends.

From the state of oneness the outward process of the world's emanation is described as going through several stages of successively grosser manifestations. So, for example:

> From this Self, verily, ether arose; from ether air; from air fire; from fire water; from water the earth; from the earth herbs; from herbs food; from food the person. (TU 2.1)<72>

At ChU 6.2.3-4, being (sat) emanates (sṛj) fire, which emanates water which emanates food, the basis of life; and at PU 1.4, Prajāpati performs tapas, giving rise to matter (rayi, feminine) and life (prāṇa, masculine), which Radhakrishnan calls "a duality of primary existences answering to matter and form of Aristotle"<73>. Of various

groups of basic elements, the most universal is the group of five, which is also found in Europe: space or ether (ākāśa), air (vāyu), fire (tejas), water (āpas), and earth (pṛthivī). Another group is of three elements, corresponding to the three guṇas (qualities) found in the later Saṁkhya philosophy: the lucid sattva, represented by whiteness; the active rajas, represented by redness; and the dark lethargic tamas, represented by blackness. This three-fold division is elaborated at some length at ChU 6 where the three qualities are symbolised by water (white), fire (red) and earth (black).

The reduction of everything to a few simple elements means that everything that we consider on the normal level to be unique or separate can in fact be explained as a modification of those elements and thus becomes known, in the same way that:

> by one clod of clay (or one nugget of gold, or one pair of nail scissors) all that is made of clay (or gold, or iron) becomes known, the modification being only a name arising from speech while the truth is that it is just clay (or gold, or iron). (ChU 4.1.4-6) <74>

So it is said that, when broken down into the simple elements, the unique quality of a thing disappears and it is easily understood as a compound form of those elements. Ultimately the process of reduction leads to the realisation that all things, though perceived as separate, are ultimately modifications of the one essential reality.

11. The universe and the individual.

I noted earlier that the Vedic myths often reveal parallels between cosmological and psychological processes. The authors of the Brāhmaṇas used Vedic imagery (particularly that of Puruṣa) to justify and sanctify their complex rites, identifying human activity (notably the material details of the sacrifice) with cosmic (notably the mythological origins and structuring of the universe). The Upaniṣads also make much of such correspondences and there are many passages linking the microcosm of the human faculties, with the macrocosm of the elements. As in the Vedas, the underlying intuition is of a universe made up of interrelated and interdependent forces, all of which are ultimately to be recognised as modifications of the one essence, brahman or ātman.

Seeing any single aspect alone as the essence, or understanding the essence as something distinct from oneself, amounts to ignorance and there are many passages demonstrating this (eg. KauU 4.1-20). However, the growth of understanding often seems to occur gradually or in stages. Just as the world's outward manifestation unfolds through several stages, so the individual penetrates to the mystery of the essential reality through envelopes of successively subtler selves or elements. So, for example, at TU 3.1.1 Bhṛgu goes to his father Varuṇa with the words: "Venerable Sir, teach me brahman." His father describes the basic constituents of life and the world and says: "That, verily, from which these beings are born, that by which, when born, they live, that into which, when departing they enter. That seek to know. That is brahman." Then, by exercise of tapas,

Bhṛgu attains successively deeper experiences of brahman: as matter or food (anna), as life or breath (prāṇa), as intelligence or mind (manas), as knowledge or wisdom (vijñāna) and finally as bliss (ānanda).<75>

A similar progressive development of understanding is expressed mythologically at ChU 8.7-12 in the story of Indra and Virocana, one a god the other a demon, who go to Prajāpati for instruction concerning the true self (ātman). Only Indra goes beyond the first level of instruction in which the true is identified with the bodily self. Returning dissatisfied again and again for further instruction, Indra understands the true self to be the dreaming self, then the self in deep sleep and finally the deathless, bodiless self behind and beyond all these partial manifestations.

The reduction of all things to the sole reality of brahman or ātman raises the interesting problem of what status should be ascribed to the empirical world. According to Deussen, who follows the philosophers of the Vedānta school of philosophy, the Upaniṣads teach a pure idealism. In his words:

> The ātman is the sole reality; with knowledge of it all is known; there is no plurality and no change. Nature which presents the appearance of plurality and change is mere illusion (māyā). <76>

He argues that this fundamental idealism lies at the heart of the Upaniṣads - indeed, at the heart of all religion and philosophy<77> - but that concessions are constantly being made (often unconsciously) to "the empirical forms of knowledge which are innate within us and assert their

right"<78>. The theoretical framework of "cosmogonism" is merely one of several approximations to pure idealism, whereby the unity of the ātman and the universe is made intelligible by putting them in a relationship of cause and effect: the atman produces the universe and then enters into it as its Self. Deussen finds support in the fact that "the professors of the Vedānta, Bādarāyaṇa, Gauḍapāda, and Śaṅkara, maintain that the sacred writings teach a creation of the universe only by way of a concession to man's faculty of understanding"<79>.

Radhakrishnan takes issue with the views expressed by Deussen and the Vedāntists<80>. He says that while the universe has no reality outside of the Absolute, nevertheless it is real in the sense that it cannot be described as mere show or illusion. It comes into being through a deliberate act of the Supreme Self, it is the emanation of the creative energy of God, and it is therefore to be taken as real though the Absolute is, as it were, more real, "the life of this life, the truth of this truth"<81>. For Deussen the universe is mere deception or illusion (so he translates māyā) and empirical knowledge of it amounts to avidyā, ignorance. For Radhakrishnan avidyā is the source of the deception and he stresses the subjective character of illusory experience as against the cosmic character of māyā which is the world. Māyā sets the stage, but it is our failure to see beyond the outward forms that traps us in ignorance of the true nature of things:

> We are subject to avidyā when we look upon the multiplicity of objects and egos as final and fundamental... The world of multiplicity is out

there, and has its place, but if we look upon it as a self-existing cosmos, we are making an error.<82>

From the point of view of the empirical self or ego some interesting implications arise out of the philosophy of karma, which begins to be formulated conceptually in the earliest Upaniṣads. Several passages describe the involvement of the individual in an endless round of birth and death according to the fruits of actions or desires:

> According as one acts, according as one behaves, so does he become. The doer of good becomes good, the doer of evil becomes evil... As his desire is so is his will; as is his will, so is the deed he does; whatever deed he does, that he attains.
>
> (BU 4.4.5)<83>

Effectively, the individual creates his own fate, even the very surroundings in which he comes to be. However, in normal life he does this blindly, through ignorance and desire, for with knowledge of brahman the cycle of phenomenal existence ceases, and the one thus freed no longer participates helplessly in it. Instead he realises himself to be the maker and controller of the world, immortal and eternally free:

> Whoever has found and has awakened to the self... he is the maker of all. His is the world; indeed he is the world itself. (BU 4.4.13)<84>

12. The Buddha's "cosmological agnosticism"<85>.

The Upaniṣads were largely the work of teachers from within the Brahmaṇical tradition who had become dissatisfied with the traditional approach. Of various more or less parallel movements springing from other sources, Buddhism is the one which gained the largest following and has been most influential. Because of this, reference to the teaching of the Buddha helps to give a more complete picture of the ideas of the Upaniṣadic period. It is important to stress that Buddhism did not appear in isolation and that there was considerable mutual influence between the various movements and schools of the time.

The Buddha differed from many of his contemporaries in that he ruled out any kind of mere speculation as unprofitable and, though he did take issue with several renowned thinkers of the time, refuting views that were false according to his own experience, he repeatedly refused to commit himself to those kinds of opinions which were the stuff of philosophical debate. His so-called difficult or unsuitable questions (avyakṛtavastūni) appear in several texts and, summarised by Kloetzi, are as follows:

> (1-4) Are the world and the self eternal? Non-eternal? Both eternal and non-eternal? Neither eternal nor non-eternal? (5-8) Are the world and the self finite? Infinite? Both finite and infinite? Neither finite nor infinite? (9-12) Does the Tathāgata exist after death? Does he not exist after death? Does he both exist and not-exist after death? Does he neither exist nor not-exist after

> death? (13-14) Is the vital principle the same as the body? Is it different from the body? <86>

When asked why he expressed no opinion on these questions the Buddha replied, as in the Potthapāda Sutta (in DN), that none of these questions was "calculated to profit, concerned with the Dhamma (teaching, law, reality: skt. dharma), leading to the elements of right conduct, to detachment, to purification from lusts, to cessation of passion, to calmness, to supra-normal knowledge, to the highest wisdom, and to nibbāna"<87>. The teaching which he chooses to expound instead, fulfills, he says, the above conditions and deals with "suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the method by which to reach the cessation of suffering"<88>, i.e. the four 'noble truths', which form the basic framework of early Buddhism.

In the Brahmajāla Sutta (also in DN), the Buddha criticizes at length the views of some ascetics and brahmans who, among other things, "speculate on the beginning of a world cycle and on the ultimate past"<89>. He describes their views as a net in which those philosophical speculators are hopelessly entangled, unlike himself:

> These view-points, thus taken up, thus adhered to, will have for result future rebirth. That the Tathāgata knows and He knows immeasurably beyond. But He is not attached to the knowledge, and from lack of attachment has found out for Himself even the final bliss. Having come to know, as they really are according to the Truth, the origin of feelings, their passing away, their satisfaction

and disadvantages, and the way of departure from them, the Tathāgata, from not grasping, is freed.<90>

Obviously we have to accept, with regard to the Buddha's teaching, a firm distinction between knowledge which is essential for liberation and that which is non-essential. By and large, questions of cosmology and cosmogony fall into the latter class, and yet it is a fact that they occupy a major place in Buddhist writings, particularly in those of the later Mahāyāna schools. This apparent paradox may be just the result of human weakness, a desire to cling to theoretical systems despite the Buddha's apparent censure. Alternatively it may be explained by what Kloetzi calls the "drama of salvation"<91>. Kloetzi uses this notion to justify the profusion of cosmological themes throughout the various phases of Buddhism as aids to understanding and communicating the teaching symbolically, rather than as speculations of value in themselves.

Though he warned against speculation on these matters, between the lines of the Buddha's discourses a coherent cosmology does emerge, not differing markedly from the familiar background of the Upaniṣads. A major job of systematization was undertaken long after his death by the compilers of the Abhidhamma (skt. Abhidharma) portion of the early Buddhist canon, and it is the so-called cakkavala (skt. cakravala) or single world system detailed there that forms the basic cosmology of early Buddhism.

13. Some elements of Buddhist cosmology and cosmogony.

The cakkavala world system has been described in detail elsewhere<92> and I propose only to pick out certain features here. There are three major divisions, into the realms of desire (kāma-vācara), those of form (rūpa-vācara) and the formless realms (arūpa vācara). The gods of the Vedic/Hindu pantheon are included in the upper levels of kāma-vācara, their existence - whether independent or purely as subjective experiences - posing no problem or threat to the Buddhist outlook. Brahmā, the highest being to concern himself with human affairs, inhabits the lowest levels of the realms of form. Mankind is placed somewhere in the middle of the realms of desire, a situation reckoned ideal for salvation, being neither so pleasurable nor so painful as to be seriously distracting for the earnest freedom-seeker.

The main thing to note is that even the highest heavens and lowest hells and their inhabitants are regarded as impermanent and ultimately unsatisfactory states of being which are transcended by the attainment of nibbāna<93>. All worlds and all beings belong to the realms of cause and effect. They have an origin or birth, a period of stability followed by decay, death and rebirth according to actions (or, more accurately, intentions). Existence is cyclic and at no level permanent or wholly secure. Hence, in relation to the absolute, all beings have essentially the same status, and individuals will pass through all manner of states and forms of existence, without apparent end, unless they find the way out. Nibbāna, which is the goal of the teaching, freedom from suffering, lies beyond all states of being and defies description or qualification in terms which apply to

phenomenal existence. Thus also the Buddha himself (like anyone else who has attained to the goal, whether through the Buddha's teaching or independently) defies classification among the beings of the universe.

Regarding the phenomenal world as a whole, the view is of a universe which undergoes periodic dissolution and re-forming, a view seems to have been widely accepted in Indian thinking by the time of the Buddha. Differences arise with regard to origin and cause. The Buddha's analysis of "false views" in the Brahmajāla Sutta gives an idea of the variety of opinions held. A most interesting aspect of the Brahmajāla Sutta is the way in which he describes certain people arriving at certain views through incomplete memory of past lives. The Buddha said of himself that he was able to recall all his innumerable past lives and remained under no illusions as to the causes and mechanisms that give rise to the world (eg. SN 2.213). Nevertheless, unlike those he criticises, he refused to be drawn on the subject of absolute origins, saying that no matter how far back one looks none are apparent. Instead he described the world process as a cyclic chain of relative causes, which he was concerned to illuminate in terms of individual involvement and transcendence.

It is not possible to specify definitely whether the levels of existence, the meditational realms, worlds, heavens and hells, of the cakkavala system are to be regarded as objectively independent, or only as subjective experiences. Ultimately it makes little or no difference. More important is the idea that the individual is reckoned to have power over his own involvement in the world, and the world, at

whatever level, is something to be transcended. An illustration of this is found at AN 2.46, where the Buddha is asked whether there is anywhere one can go to escape birth, decay, death and rebirth, anywhere one can go to discover "the end of the world". He replies in the negative, saying instead that:

> in this very body, six feet in length, with its sense-impressions and its thoughts and ideas, I do declare to you are the world, and the origin of the world, and the ceasing of the world, and likewise the Way that leadeth to the ceasing thereof.<94>

Again his answer points to the four Noble Truths, the second of which concerns the origin of the world (of suffering). The second truth is dealt with in detail in the chain of paṭīccasamuppāda (skt. pratītyasamutpāda), 'interdependent origination' or 'conditioned co-production', which explains phenomenal existence - called saṁsāra, 'endless flux' - as a beginningless and endless self-perpetuating cycle, driven mainly by the forces of ignorance and desire, in the context of which questions of an absolute beginning or end have no place.

14. Some comparisons between Buddhist and Upaniṣadic ideas.

Many writers have pointed out essential similarities between the Hindu and the Buddhist positions regarding the goal of the religious life. Mokṣa (from the root muc, to free) and nibbāna/nirvāṇa (from nis-vā, to be blown out - as of a flame - to be assuaged or cooled) are used in a very similar way as designations for that ultimate freedom, which is reckoned in Hinduism as in Buddhism to be essentially indescribable and indefineable. Not only are they in basic agreement, but enlightened teachers on both sides recognise the common aims and achievements. The Buddha, like other teachers, did not claim his teaching as totally unique or new. He recognised previous Buddhas and sages outside Buddhism, including those he called paccekabuddhas (skt. pratyekabuddha), those who attain to the same highest goal as himself but do not, like himself, become teachers for the benefit of other beings. And though he often criticized unenlightened teachers from the Brahmanical tradition, he was not averse to using their ideas and terminology if it suited his purpose. <95>

Regarding the phenomenal world, the Buddha, like some of the Upaniṣadic teachers, taught that all things could be broken down into their constituent elements and thus understood. The fundamental elements or building blocks of the universe are similar in Buddhism to those described in the Upaniṣads, though his analysis of human personality is far more detailed and exhaustive than anything in those texts. As in the Upaniṣadic tradition, the universe is understood in Buddhism to be a coherent process guaranteed by the existence of a universal natural law or order

(dhamma/dharma)<96>. Both traditions agree that no creator, except perhaps as an agent inherent in the process itself, is required to explain the origin of the world, though there are strongly theistic trends in the Vedic-Upaniṣadic tradition, arising from the fact that the absolute is experienced by some as a personal being. Generally speaking, the Buddha's teachings on the driving forces - notably ignorance and desire - behind existence, the workings of karmic law and the essential worthlessness of the whole of phenomenal reality, are in agreement with the views most frequently and forcefully expressed in the Upaniṣads. We can compare the Upaniṣadic notion that each of us is the "maker and controller" of the world with the Buddha's statement that within "this fathom-long body" is to be found the origin and end of the world.

The problem of whether the empirical world can be called 'real' or not has exercised some Buddhist minds just as it has the interpretors of the Upaniṣads (see chapter 11). Nāgārjuna, an eminent Buddhist philosopher of the 2nd or 3rd century AD, formulated the idea of two levels of truth - saṁvṛti satya (phenomenal truth) and paramārtha satya (absolute truth) - according to which saṁsāra is true and real from the point of view of a being in saṁsāra, but from the level of the absolute, nirvāṇa, it has no reality. The important thing is to acknowledge the level one is talking from or about. This idea can be usefully applied to the Buddha's original teaching and also may help in understanding some parts of the Upaniṣads such as MaiU 6.17: if brahman is infinite in all directions, from the point of view of brahman "east and the other directions exist not", yet they are real

from the point of view of the created world.

The main difference between the Upaniṣadic teachings and the Buddhist concerns the relationship of the phenomenal world to the absolute. The Upaniṣadic teachers, as we have seen, quite clearly equate the goal of knowledge with the source of existence, that is, brahman or ātman, but the Buddha never asserted that nibbāna was either the source or in any way causally connected with saṁsāra. Indeed he spoke of nibbāna as everything samsāra is not. On the other hand, I am not aware that he ever expressly denied any relation between the absolute source and the ultimate reality. He merely dismissed such questions and speculations as inappropriate. It is interesting that some later schools of Buddhism (notably Vijñānavāda) come round to a view whereby from the angle of an enlightened one no real distinction is drawn between saṁsāra and nirvāṇa. According to the Vijñānavādins, the attainment of nirvāṇa entails a shift in consciousness (from the context of loka-dhātu, 'world-element' to dharma-dhātu, 'reality-element'), saṁsāra is not literally left behind but rather ceases to bind the enlightened one. From such an angle, no longer perceiving any dichotomy of subject and object or of this world and the beyond, saṁsāra and nirvāṇa are said to be one and the same.

APPENDIX: Some notes on cosmogony in other cultures.

There are many parallels with India in the mythology and philosophy of other cultures. While I have drawn attention to a few of them in the course of this study, it is perhaps worth elaborating a little further.

I mentioned in the first chapter that water is a common symbol for the world potential, the primal element. It is found in other Indo-European and also (for example) Semitic mythologies, notably in biblical image of "the Spirit of God" moving on the face of the waters<97>. The cosmic egg is found elsewhere, for example in Greek, Egyptian and Japanese cosmogonies<98>, and the flood-myth appears in several contexts too, in the biblical story of Noah's Ark, for example.

Varuṇa, closely connected with the waters in the Vedas is (as I mentioned in chapter 7) possibly of the same Indo-European root as the Greek Ouranos. Anyone familiar with the Vedic Varuṇa might be struck by a cosmogonic passage from Hesiod which tells how "broad-breasted Gaia, the firm and everlasting abode of all divinities", gave birth (without a mate) to: "first of all and as her equal, the starry Sky, Ouranos, so that he should completely cover her and be a firm and everlasting abode for the blessed gods" (Theogonia 116) <99>. Varuṇa's name, as I said, may be derived from a root meaning 'to cover', 'to encompass', he is the first-born of Aditi and he is represented particularly by the sky with its stars, moon and sun. Incidentally, Varana of the old-Iranian Avesta is called the "all-encompassing sky"<100>.

The myth of Indra and Vṛtra is probably related to the

hero-dragon-maiden stories which appear frequently in other Indo-European mythologies. It is interesting to note that the patron saint of England, St. George, may actually be a heroic figure from pre-Christian Indo-European mythology. Slightly further afield, in Babylonian cosmogony, one of the two primal forms of water, Tiamat - representing the dark, destructive powers of nature - is depicted in their mythology as a dragon who is slain by the hero Merodach or Marduk<101>.

Kāma, Love or Desire in the Indian texts, "the first seed of mind" (RV 10.129.4), is mirrored in Greek - particularly Orphic - mythology by Eros, among whose other names are Protogonos ('first-born') and Phanes ('he who appears' or 'he who reveals'). In some stories Eros was born from a silver egg produced by Chronos, Time, or Nyx, Night, and in turn produced the other gods<102>.

The Word, prominent in the Brāhmaṇas, appears in other contexts, notably in opening lines of St. John's Gospel in the New Testament of the Bible where its Greek form is logos. Logos also features significantly in the writings of the Gnostics of early Christianity<103>.

I referred in chapter 1 to the Greek word demiurgos, while speaking about the creator or creative power as something distinct from the absolute source. In some Gnostic writings the Demiurge is the creator and ruler of an imperfect, limited cosmos in which the soul or spirit is trapped as in a prison. The true God, the goal of spiritual aspiration, lies beyond and is not actually causally responsible for the world of suffering and evil<104>. Whether or not there was any direct influence from India, we can

recognise here a very similar view to that in early Buddhism, where Māra (Death, the destroyer) presides over the whole of saṁsāra, while nirvāṇa lies beyond and is in no way causally connected with it.

NOTES

1. For a full discussion of the changing approach of modern European scholarship to the interpretation of the Vedas see K. Werner, The Teachings of the Veda and the Adhyātmika Method of Interpretation, in the Golden Jubilee Volume of the Vaidika Samsodhana Mandala, Poona 1981, pp.288-295.

2. Incidentally, recognition of this decline can be seen clearly in some late hymns of the Vedas, like RV 10.82, the last verse of which runs:

> You have no knowledge of him who created these worlds;
> some other thing has interposed between you.
> The reciters of hymns who ravish life in their ritual
> proceed with their muttering, enwrapped in confusion
> and ignorance.

(R. Panikkar, The Vedic Experience: Mantramañjarī, London 1977, p.813.)

3. A typical reaction, emphatically expressed, opens Eggeling's introduction to his translation of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa:

> In the whole range of literature few works are probably less calculated to excite the interest of any outside the very limited number of specialists than the... Brāhmaṇas. For wearisome prolixity of expression, characterised by dogmatic assertion and a flimsy symbolism rather than serious reasoning, these works are perhaps not equalled anywhere...

(Sacred Books of the East, ed. F. Max Muller, vol. XII, p.ix.)

4. I have generally kept to Pali for Buddhist terms, putting in brackets their Sanskrit equivalents.

5. The evolutionary view of religion is more or less taken for granted by many writers. Thus Radhakrishnan and Moore can get away with saying that the RV "represents the earliest phase of the evolution of religious consciousness where we have not so much commandments of priests as the outpourings of poetic minds who are struck by the inexhaustible mystery of life" (A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy, Princeton 1973, p.4). Deussen, writing at the turn of the century, compares Veda and Upaniṣad with the Old Testament and the New Testament of the Bible, seeing the latter as the culmination and crowning achievement of the former. He goes on to say:

> this analogy is not merely external and accidental, but is fundamental and based upon a universal law of development of the religious life which is acknowledged on both sides.

(P. Deussen, The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads, New York 1966, p.46)

I would argue both with the idea of any such universal law and with the assertion that it is "acknowledged on both sides". The New Testament may well be to Christians the climax and fulfillment of the Old Testament, but in India the Vedas traditionally hold the place of authority and in the Upaniṣads themselves references are made to Vedic verses as records of the very highest understanding (see note 61).

6. Werner speaks of "the complexity of the Vedic message delivered simultaneously on several levels - addressing ordinary people, educated classes like priests and aristocrats and also a spiritually minded minority - through the medium of the language of symbols and myths" (K. Werner, Symbolism in the Vedas and its Conceptualisation, in Numen vol.xxiv - Dec.1977, p.223).

7. Werner, Symbolism in the Vedas..., p.224.

8. Panikkar, p.102.

9. Panikkar, p.98.

10. Panikkar, p.60.

11. The root ṛ or ar may be connected with the fitting of spokes to the hub of a wheel. See Panikkar, p.350 note 132.

12. See F.B.J. Kuiper, Ancient Indian Cosmogony, New Delhi 1983, ch.4: "The Bliss of Aša".

13. Panikkar, p.509.

14. A.A. Macdonell, Vedic Mythology, Delhi 1981, p.70.

15. Panikkar, p.72.

16. Werner, Symbolism in the Vedas..., p.231.

17. Kuiper, pp.9-10.

18. See for example the discussion in Macdonell, p.54ff.

19. Kuiper, pp.12-13.

20. Panikkar, p.497.

21. I owe a lot here to Werner, Symbolism in the Vedas..., pp.223-240. References are to Macdonell's translation, used also by Werner in the article.

22. Panikkar, p.660.

23. Panikkar, p.759.

24. Panikkar, p.660.

25. Werner, Symbolism in the Vedas..., p.225.

26. An alternative derivation might possibly be made from the root dā, 'cut off', hence 'uncut', 'undivided'.

27. Werner, Symbolism in the Vedas..., p.226.

28. Macdonell, p.121.

29. Werner, Symbolism in the Vedas..., p.231.

30. Werner, Yoga and Indian Philosophy, Delhi 1977, p.27. See also Symbolism in the Vedas..., p.233.

31. Panikkar, p.508.

32. Panikkar, p.508.

33. Eg. J.L. Brockington, The Sacred Thread, Edinburgh 1981, p.108.

34. Panikkar, p.508.

35. Panikkar, p.245.

36. Panikkar, p.208.

37. Panikkar, p.63.

38. Panikkar, p.65.

39. Panikkar, p.84.

40. Panikkar, p.825.

41. Sacrifice is also central to the Vedas and to the Upaniṣads, but in slightly different ways. Panikkar says:

> If one had to choose a single word to express the quintessence of the Vedic Revelation, the word yajña, sacrifice, would perhaps be the most adequate... The conception of sacrifice, certainly, varied through the ages, and the term itself has received differing connotations, but the underlying intuition and its centrality have remained.
> (Panikkar, p.347.)

42. S.Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upaniṣads, London 1953, p.52.

43. For a discussion of the meaning of brahman, see Werner, Yoga and Indian Philosophy, p.30.

44. Panikkar, p.80.

45. Eggeling, p.153.

46. For a discussion of the incest theme see Panikkar, p.544ff.

47. Panikkar, p.107.

48. Panikkar, p.88.

49. Panikkar, p.106.

50. Panikkar, p.107.

51. N.N. Bhattacharyya, History of Indian Cosmogonical Ideas, New Delhi 1971, p.31.

52. Such as the "pure sounds", bhūḥ, bhuvaḥ, svar, and the sacred syllable, om. See, for example, AB 5.32.

53. Eggeling, p.374.

54. Panikkar, p.79.

55. For references see Panikkar, p.152.

56. Panikkar, p.152.

57. Kuiper, pp.9-22.

58. Eggeling, p.380.

59. Radhakrishnan p.73.

60. Deussen, The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads p.38ff.

61. An example of such a reference is at ChU 3.17.6-7 where the author quotes from RV 1.50.10, putting the Vedic imagery of dawn and light alongside the Upaniṣadic terminology of freedom from desire and realisation of oneness with the undying essence of life.

62. So, for example, from the agnihotra - the traditional fire-sacrifice central to the Vedic ritual and elaborated in the speculations of the Brāhmaṇas - the Upaniṣadic authors developed the notion of prāṇāgnihotra, the inner 'fire oblation by breath'.

63. Radhakrishnan, p.

64. Radhakrishnan, p.646. See also MuṇU 3.1.8.

65. Radhakrishnan, pp.447-9.

66. Radhakrishnan, p.448.

67. Deussen, p.128.

68. Radhakrishnan, p.192.

69. Panikkar, p.156.

70. Radhakrishnan, p.166.

71. Radhakrishnan, p.548.

72. Radhakrishnan, p.542.

73. Radhakrishnan, p.652.

74. Radhakrishnan, pp.446-7. See also ChU 6.4.

75. Radhakrishnan, pp.553-7.

76. Deussen, p.237.

77. Deussen, p.40.

78. Deussen, p.236.

79. Deussen, pp.184-5.

80. Radhakrishnan, p.84ff.

81. Radhakrishnan, p.85.

82. Radhakrishnan, p.89.

83. Radhakrishnan, p.272.

84. Radhakrishnan, p.276.

85. The phrase 'cosmological agnosticism' is borrowed from Kloetzi, Buddhist Cosmology, Delhi 1983, p.12.

86. Kloetzi, p.1. See p.1, note 1, for sources and variations.

87. T. Ling (ed. & arr.), The Buddha's Philosophy of Man, London 1981, p. 63.

88. Ling, p. 64.

89. A.A.G. Bennett, Long Discourses of the Buddha, Bombay 1964, p.43.

90. Bennett, p.45.

91. Kloetzi, p.12.

92. For discussion and references, see Kloetzi, ch.2.

93. See, for example, the Buddha's discourse on universal impermanence at AN 10.29.

94. F.L. Woodward, Some Sayings of the Buddha, London 1925, p.224-6.

95. An example of this can be found in the Tevijja Sutta, where two young Brahmans, Vasettha and Bharadvaga, arguing about which path taught by their elders leads most surely to union with Brahmā, turn to him for advice. The Buddha points out that those corrupt Brahmans, with wealth and wives, of unsound minds and impure hearts, quite opposed to the qualities attributed to Brahmā, can neither have attained to union with him nor be in a position to teach the way to such union. Of one who, on the other hand, has followed the eightfold path taught by a Tathāgata - himself visible proof of and free from all doubts about the religious life and its fruits - he says this:

> [If] you say, Vasettha, that the Bhikkhu is free from anger, free from malice, pure in mind, and master of himself; and that Brahmā is likewise free from anger etc. Then in sooth, Vasettha, that the Bhikkhu who is free from anger etc. should after death, when the body is dissolved, become united with Brahmā, who is the same - such a condition of things is in every way possible.

(Dwight Goddard, A Buddhist Bible, New York 1970, p.72)

96. See E. Conze, Buddhist Thought in India, London 1962, pt.1 ch.7.

97. Genesis ch.1 v.2. Hebrew cosmogony appears to be a modification of the Babylonian, in which water plays an important part. See Bhattacharyya, p.121.

98. Bhattacharyya, pp.115, 117 & 120.

99. C. Kerenyi, The Gods of the Greeks, London 1979.

100. Panikkar, p.507.

101. Bhattacharyya, p.118.

102. Kerenyi, pp.16, 17, 114, etc.

103. See K. Rudolph (transl. Wilson), Gnosis, Edinburgh 1983, p.77 and other refs.

104. Rudolph, p.58 and other refs.

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